Public Speaking Success

The 20-Minute Book That Will Teach Absolutely Anyone How to Become a Great Public Speaker.

TJ Walker

This book is designed for busy professionals who don't have more than 20 minutes to spend reading a public speaking book.

(Note: for the purposes of this book, I use the terms "speech," "presentation," and "talk" interchangeably. I am referring to anytime you have to prepare something to say for more than one person, typically in a business situation. This can refer to so-called formal or informal presentations within your own organization or to those outside your organization).

You may not like public speaking. You might think you are bad, boring or just below average as a speaker. It's not your fault. Chances are, you were never taught how to be a good public speaker, or you were taught the wrong things (like visualizing your audience naked—yuck!)

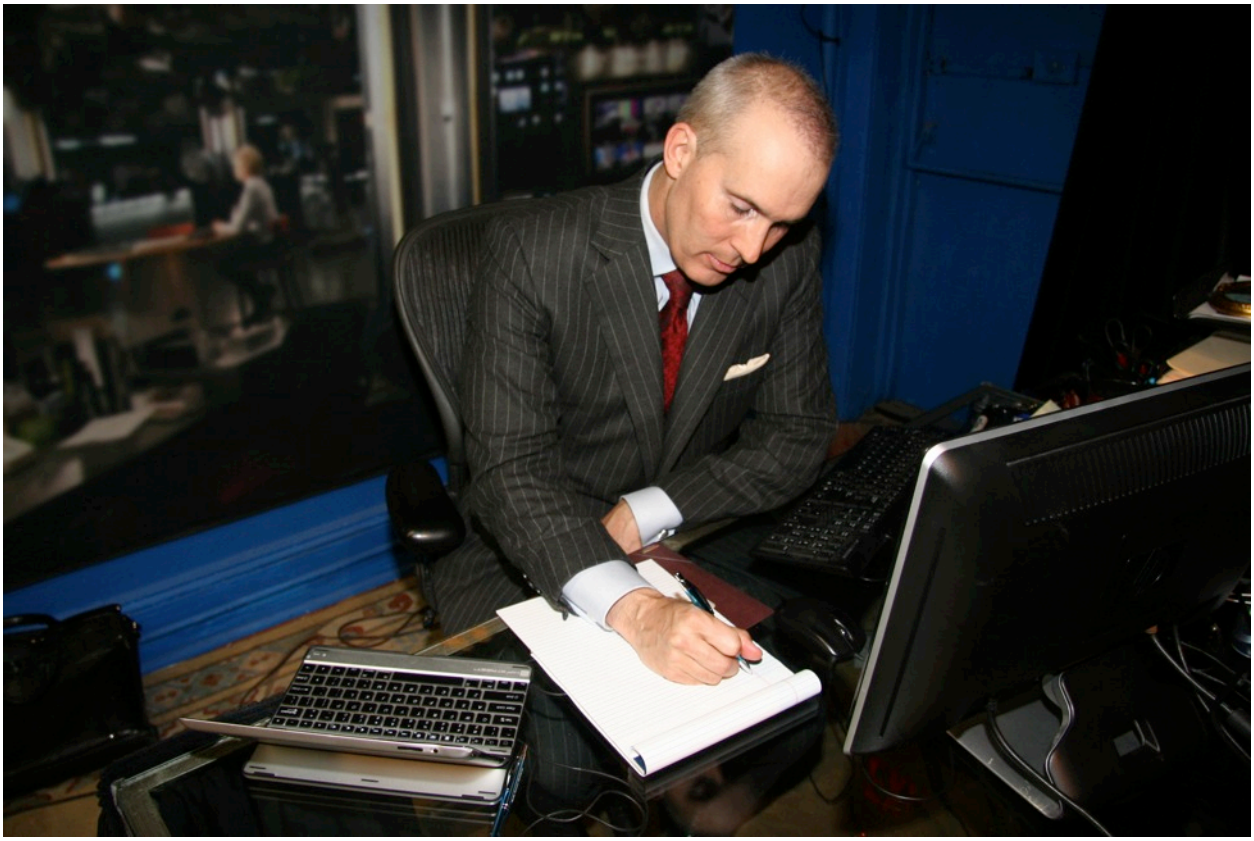
I am here to tell you that anyone can become a highly effective speaker, and I mean anyone. Learning to be an effective speaker is not like learning to be a scratch golfer or world-class violinist—those are really hard achievements and require special talents.

Whether you have below-average intelligence (not a typo!) or above, I guarantee you that you can become a great public speaker by following the 20 simple rules you will learn here in the next 20 minutes! And will not need drugs, meditation techniques or hours of memorization.

I am often asked to give keynote speeches around the world on the topic of public speaking. For the purposes of demonstration in this book I will show you what steps I take when preparing a speech on the topic of: How To Become A More Memorable Public Speaker.

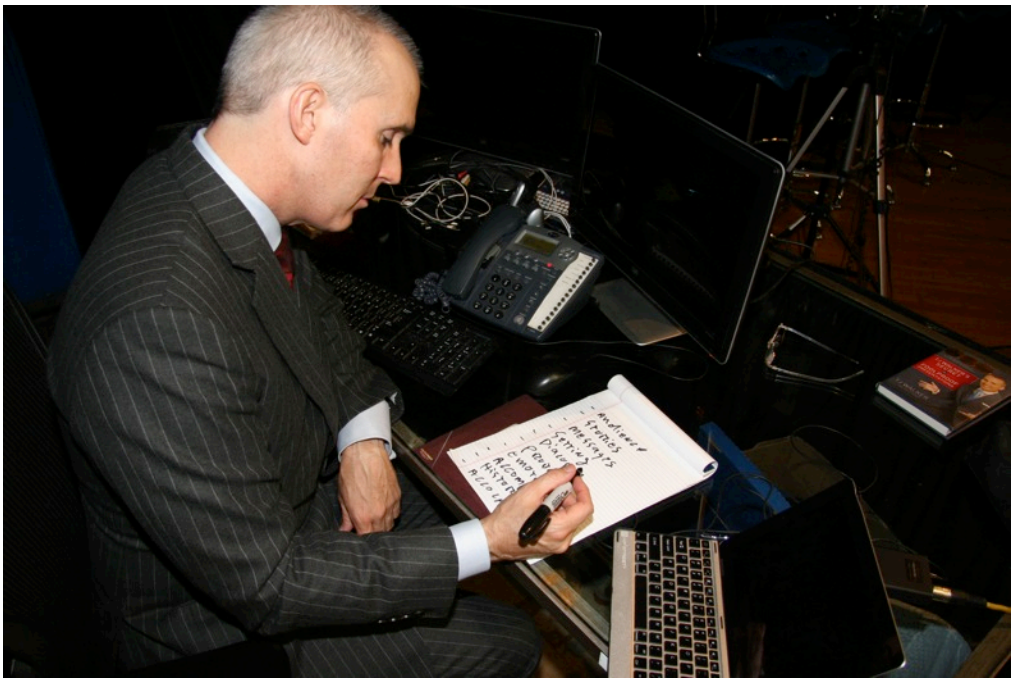
Step 1.

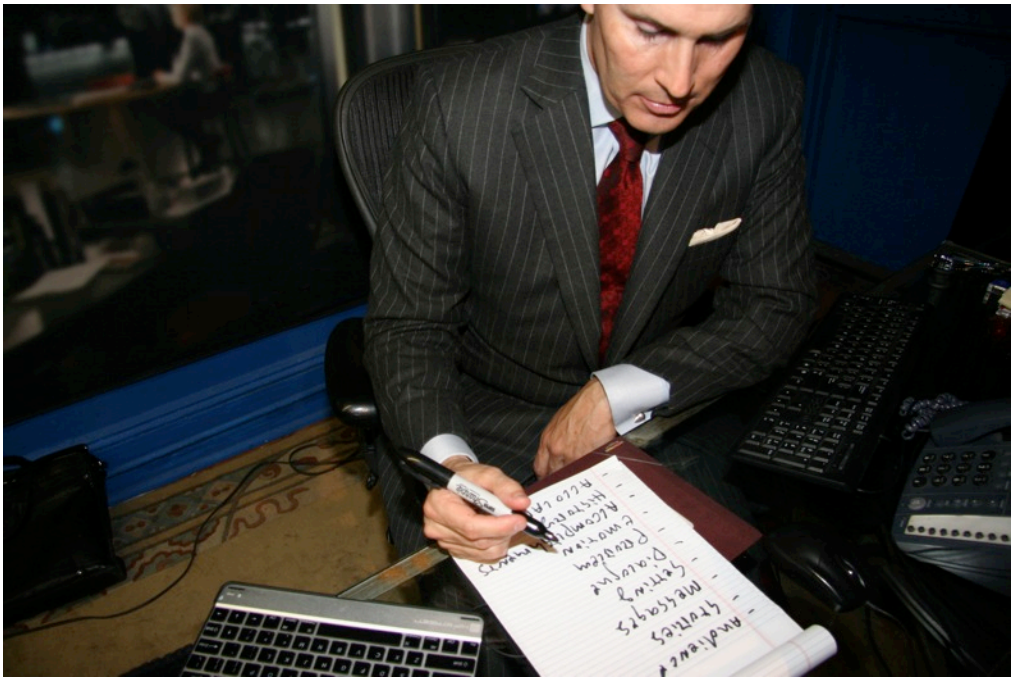
Reflect on what the goals are for your talk and then prepare your presentation by writing down every idea, message, fact or number you'd like to communicate in your speech.



This is the time to come up with as many ideas as you possibly can. All of these ideas do not have to be earth shatteringly brilliant. Most of them will not make it

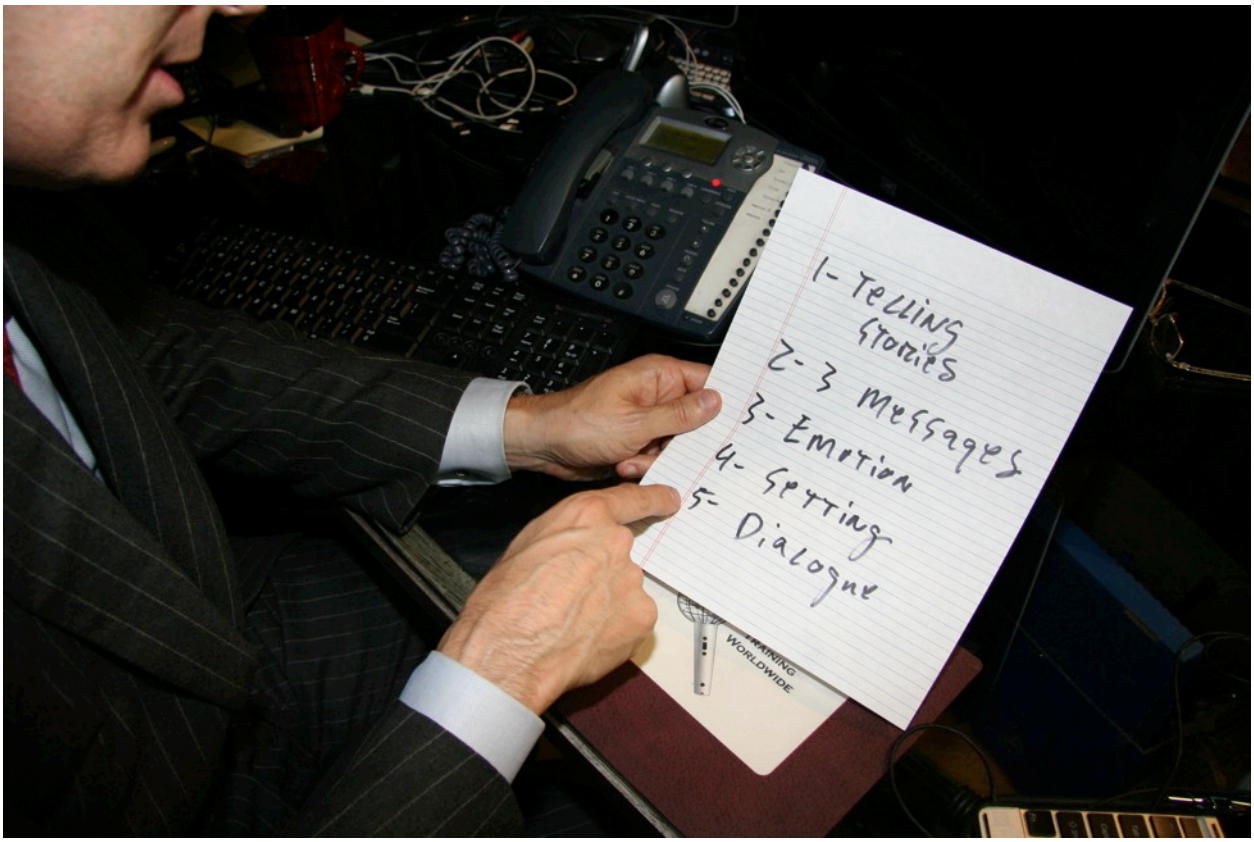
into the final outline of your speech but it will give you an opportunity to brainstorm and fine-tune what ideas you have to work with.





Step 2.

Put your messages in priority and come up with your top five ideas. (If you try to communicate more than five big ideas in a presentation, you are being too ambitious and you will fail to get your audience to remember them all).



The number one reason most presentations fail is because they are boring data dumps as far as your audience is concerned. Public speaking is simply not a very good way of communicating lots of information to adults in non-academic settings.

Some people think back to past teachers they may have had and look to them as role models for the public speakers they would like to emulate. The only problem

with this thinking is that teachers are always speaking to a captive audience that HAS to pay attention.

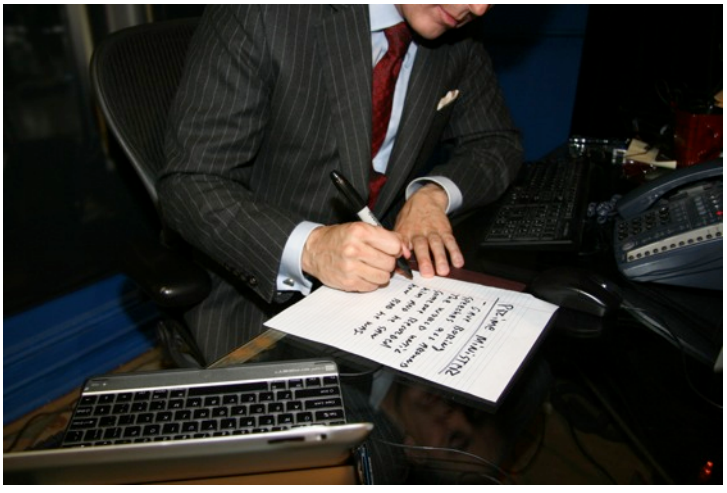
It does not matter whether a teacher uses brilliant stories to make points more memorable or simply does a data dump of facts and figures because you, as the student, have to listen and take notes.

It is not like this in the real world. If you try doing that during a speech or presentation, your audience will zone out, start checking their Blackberry, or simply walk out of the room. You, as the speaker, do not hold the power of assigning a grade to keep your audience at full attention, even if you are their superior!

Step 3.

Come up with a relevant story for each message point. A story is simply a conversation you had with a real person, client, colleague, customer or employee about a real problem. (Note: telling yourself “I’m not really good at stories” is complete BS—everyone tells stories.)

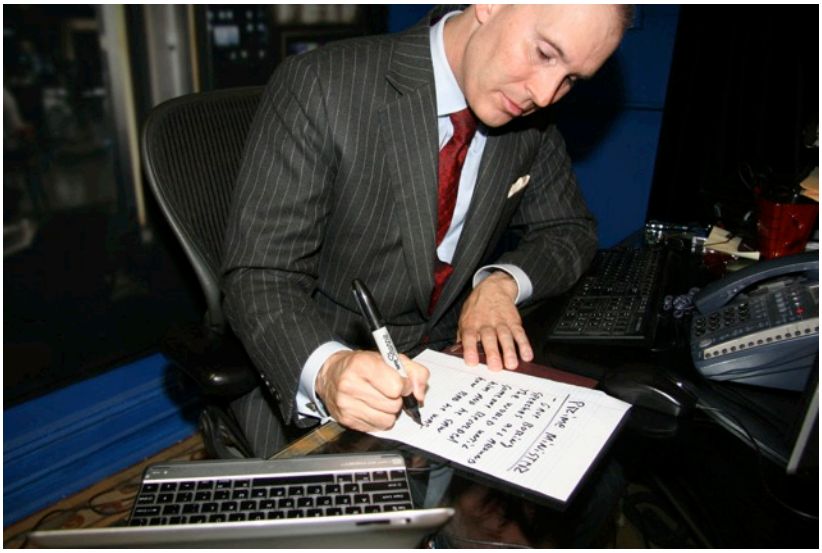
If you can’t come up with a story for any one message point, throw the message point away.



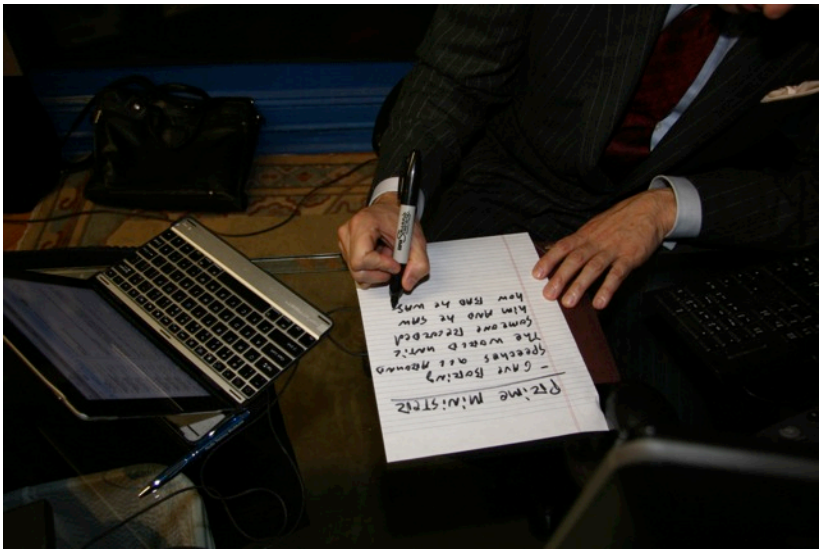
When telling a story it is important to paint a mental picture for your audience to relate to.

You do not simply want to say, “I did this and then he did that.”

It is important to use specifics such as actual dialogue that was spoken (by either you or the subject in your story) and the actual people who said it.

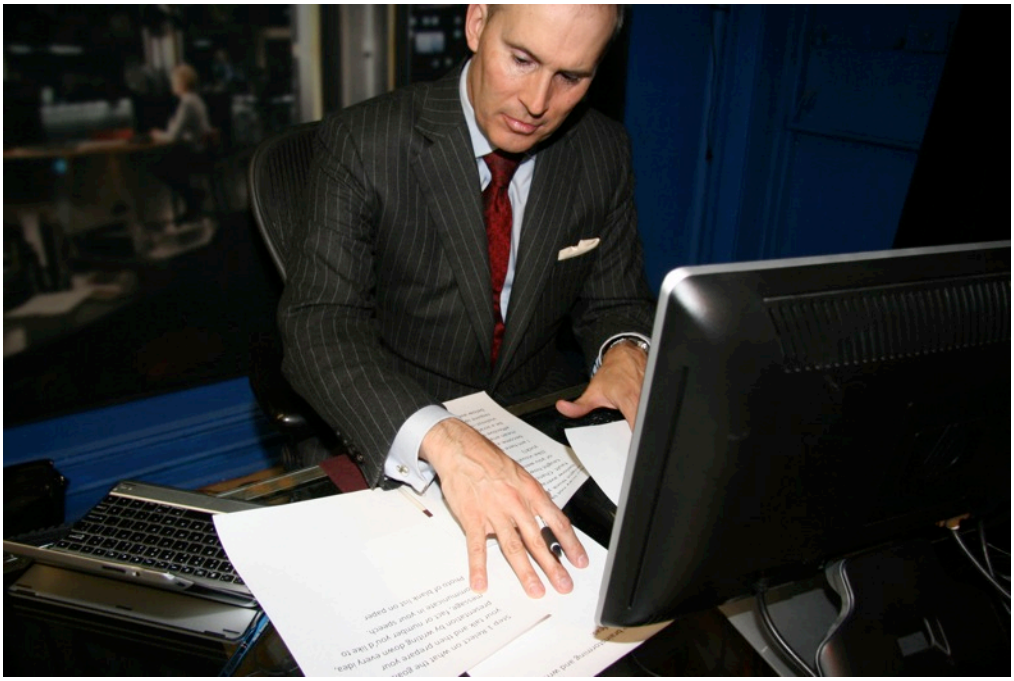


Another way to engage your audience when telling a story is to describe the setting. This will force the audience to visualize what you are saying by running a mini-movie in their heads.



Step 4.

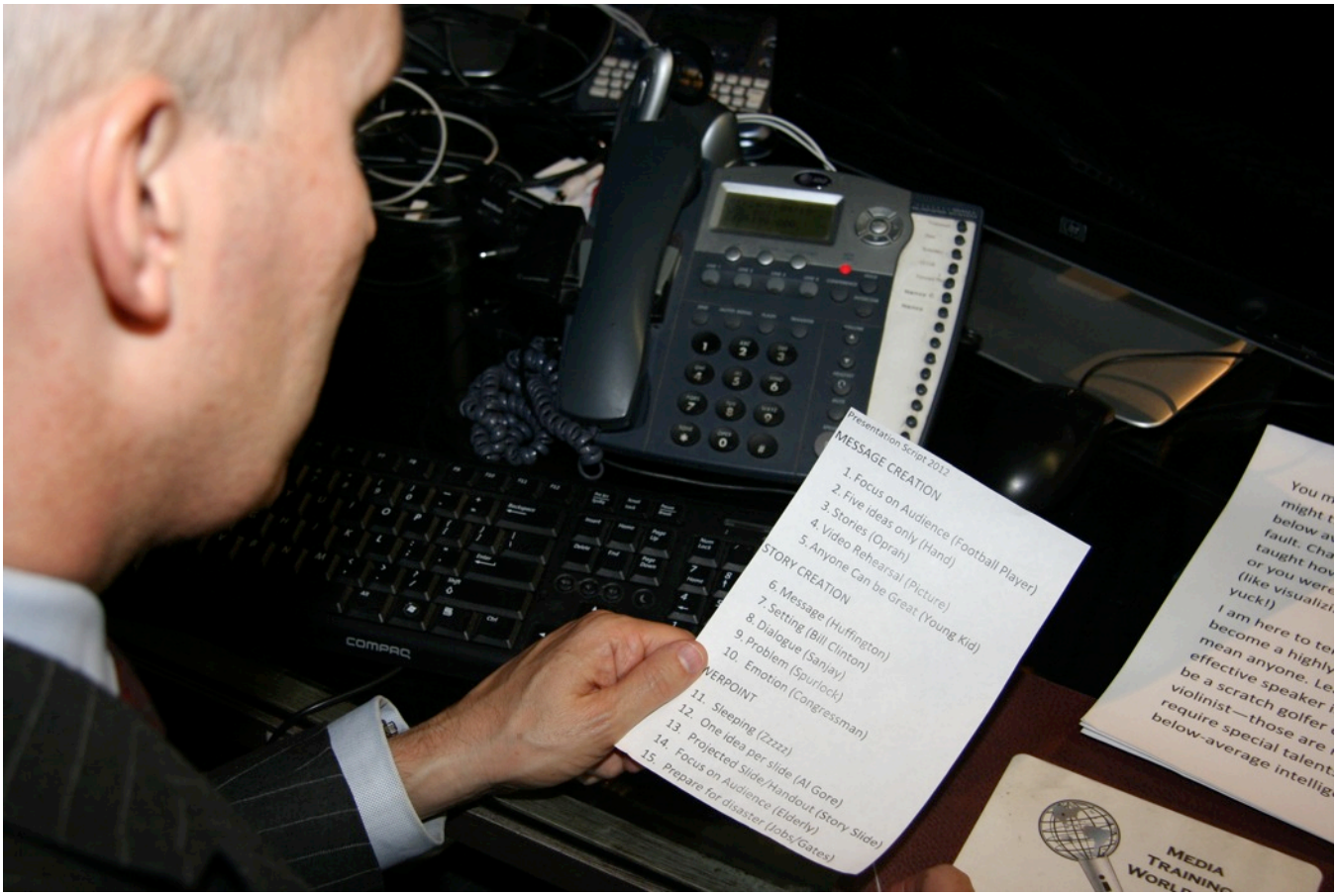
Brainstorm on examples, facts and numbers to flesh out your five message points.



This is the time that you want to get all of your thoughts and ideas down on paper. This will still not be your finished speech or script.

Step 5.

Now you can write the outline of your speech on a single sheet of paper with your five messages and a few words to remind you of your stories and examples.



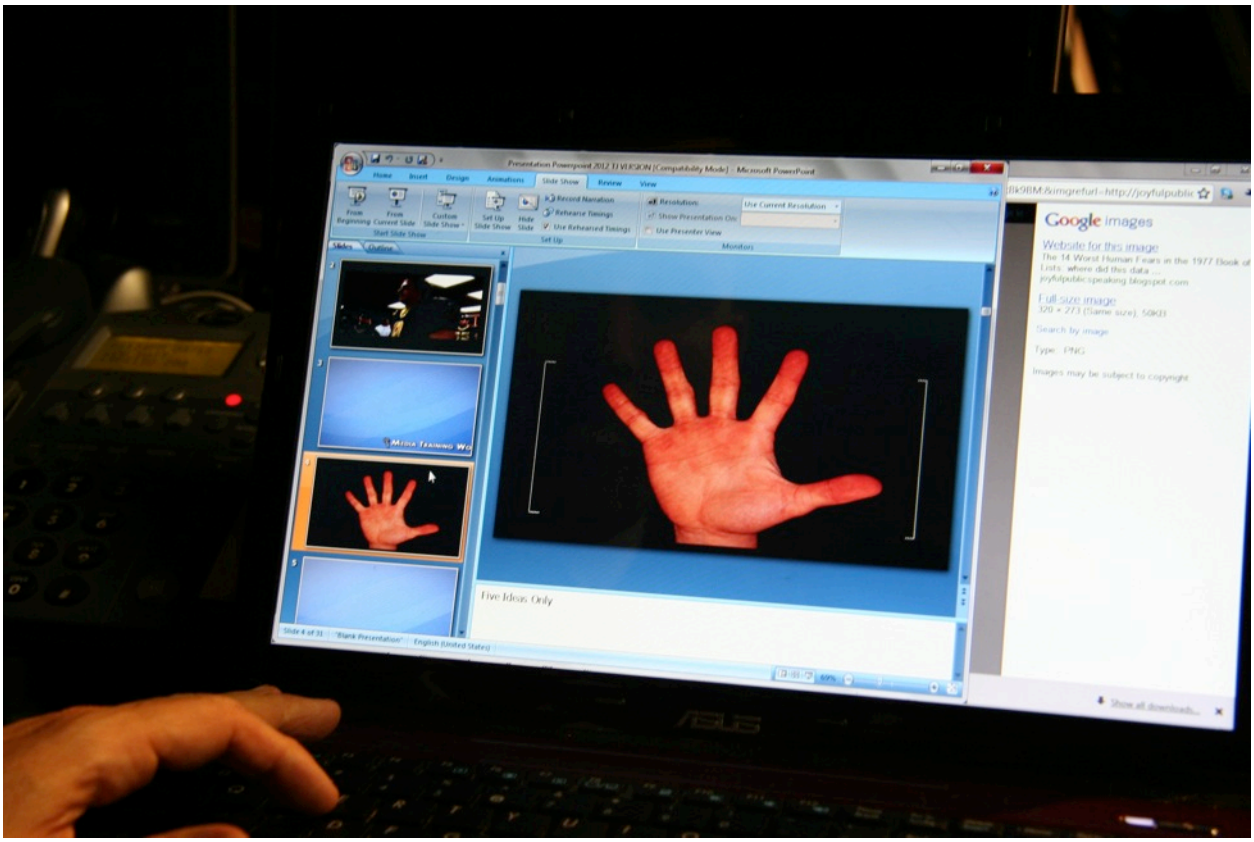
When coming up with an outline you do not want to write out your entire speech or even full thoughts.

There is nothing more boring to an audience member than sitting and listening to someone read their entire speech from a set of notes. SNORE! The goal here is for you to become a more effective and memorable speaker.

Memorable speakers do not ever read directly from notes. They utilize an outline with a few key words or bullet points to help them remember where they are in a speech and what is coming up next. Using such an outline also allows a speaker to move freely and comfortably about the room or stage without being tied to the lectern.

Step 6.

If you are using PowerPoint, find an image, photo or graph that makes each one of your key points more understandable and memorable. (If you aren't using PowerPoint, skip to step 11).



I use a picture of a hand in my presentations to clients to represent the idea that someone should only focus on 5 ideas during any given speech.

This image is much more powerful and memorable than me simply putting up a slide with text that makes the same point.

You always want to focus the attention of your audience on one thing. If you have text heavy slides that force people to read, they are reading about several different things and not paying attention to you.

The only reading you want your audience to do is after your speech with the PowerPoint you give them as a handout that reinforces what you said.

Step 7.

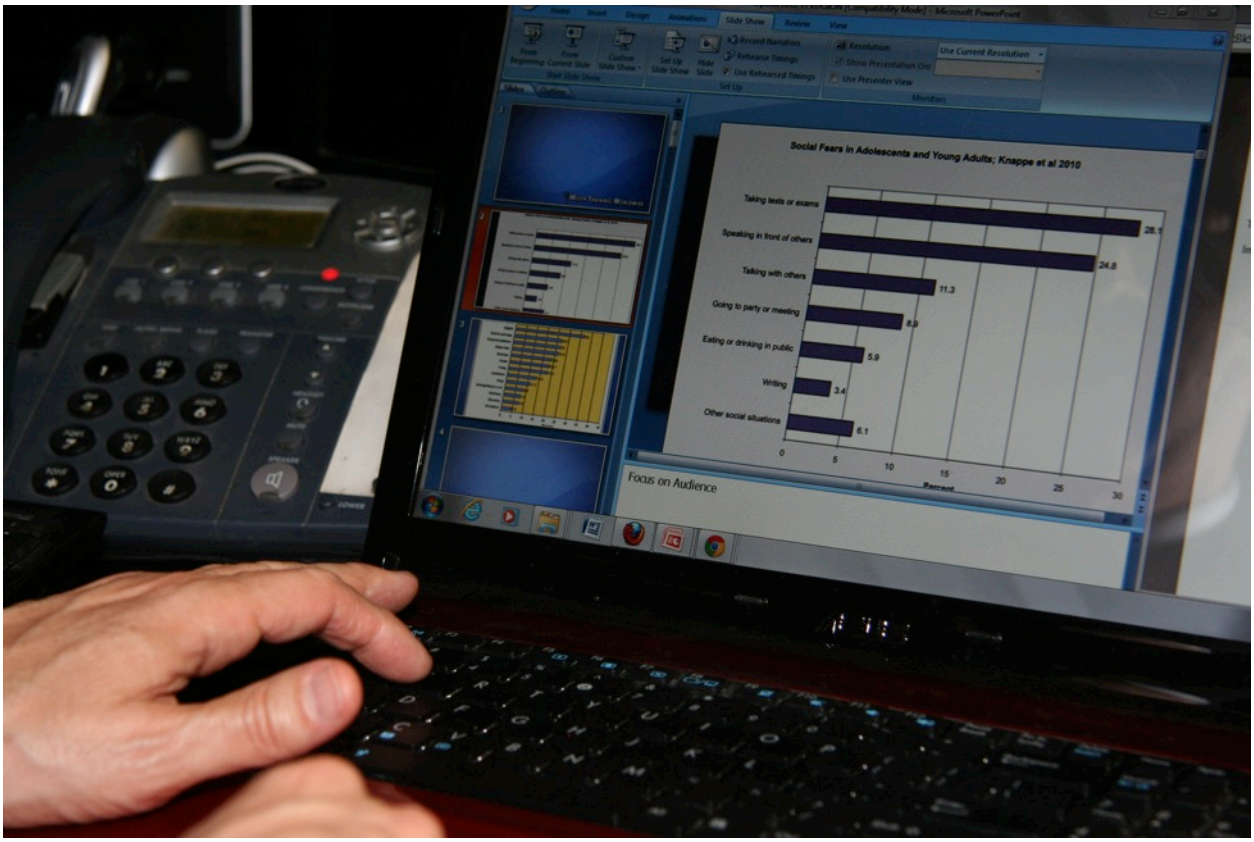
This is the type of PowerPoint imagery you should project on a screen in front of an audience. One simple thought. Don't use any text; simply use images, photos, non-complicated graphs or videos.

One of the examples that I use when giving a speech on how to be a more memorable speaker is to use a non-political video clip of Bill Clinton.

Instead of simply speaking about what an effective communicator Clinton is or putting up a list of reasons why I think he is great, I use a video of him speaking to demonstrate the point I am trying to get across to my audience.

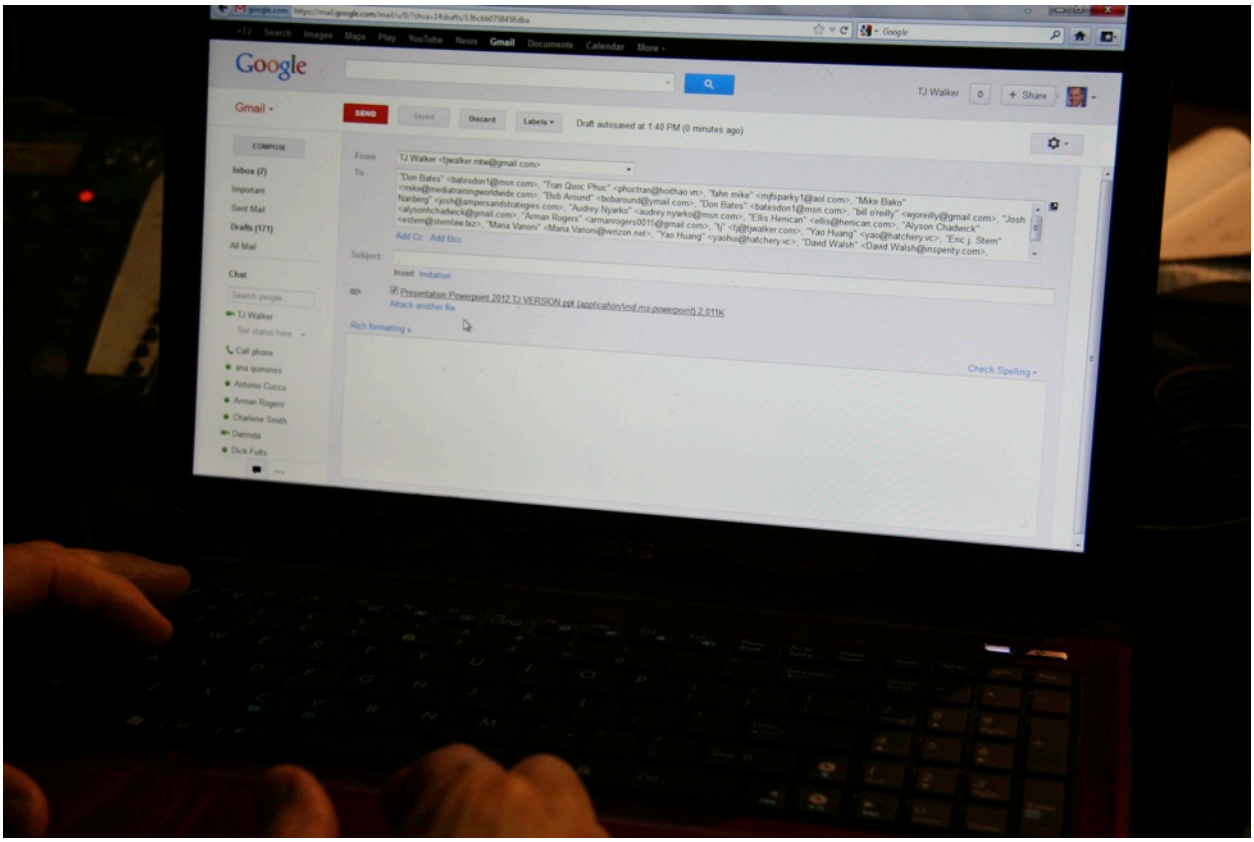
Step 8.

Create a second PowerPoint presentation that is filled with lots and lots of data, charts, numbers and complex graphs (you know, the normal boring PowerPoint you and your colleagues always come up with.)



Step 9.

Then email your text-filled PowerPoint to your audience members in advance of the presentation or hand it out after your presentation or both. Those who want to read it will. Those who don't, won't.



Whatever you do, please do not hand out your presentation *BEFORE* your speech.

During your speech you want the audience's undivided attention to be on what YOU are saying and, at the appropriate time, on your PowerPoint.

If you give out your PowerPoint right before the speech this will be a surefire invitation to have people flipping through pages and jumping ahead of the content you are presenting.

Hand your presentation and/or slides out *AFTER* your speech.

Step 10.

If a boss or colleague gives you a boring data dump PowerPoint Presentation that you must use in your presentation, simply add an interesting image or photo for your five main points and keep all the other data where it is.

We have probably all been in a situation where “company guidelines” dictate that you must have a certain number of graphs or charts in your presentation. Or even better, you hear the excuse that, “this is how it has always been done here!”

This is a lame excuse that people use when they end up giving a boring presentation.

Ultimately, you are the one that is giving the presentation and it is your reputation on the line.

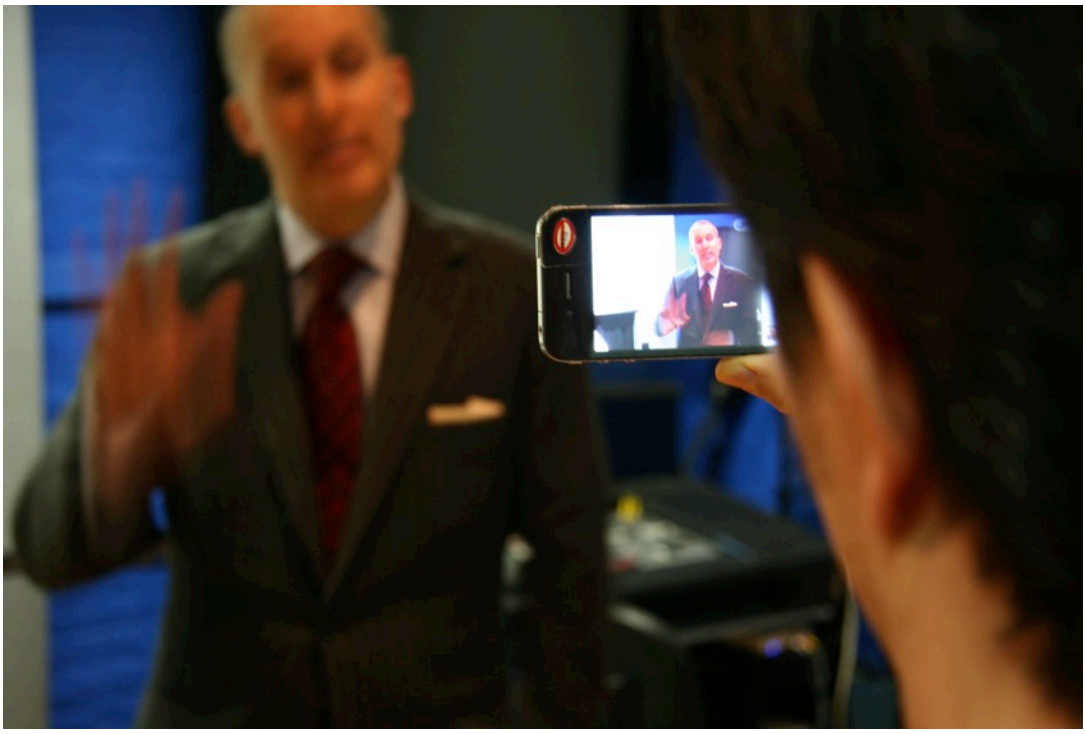
Step 11.

Prepare to practice your speech by finding 3 or 4 friends or colleagues and ask them to watch you give your presentation (one of them can be your dog). Perhaps bribe them with a free sandwich at lunchtime!

If you are making a new business pitch or speaking about a new product launch that could be worth millions of dollars, isn't it worth investing a few dollars in sandwiches and drinks for an audience that you can practice in front of?

By practicing in front of an audience you will have the opportunity to have a simple instant focus group that will be able to give you feedback on: what works and what didn't work, as well as what they remembered.

Step 12. Ask one of your friends to record your speech on video using a cell phone or any other simple video recording device.



If this were ten years ago when video cameras and recording equipment were expensive then there might be some excuse for not being able to record yourself.

But now, every new iPhone, Blackberry, or computer with a webcam is its own self-contained recording device. You can use these to record your speech or rehearsal at any time and in any place.

Advances in technology have left it virtually impossible to use the excuse that: You were not able to record yourself numerous times and have already seen multiple versions on video of what your speech looks and sounds like.

Step 13.

Give your speech to your friends/colleagues.

This is your opportunity to practice your speech in order to find out what works and what does not work.

Practicing in front of an audience will also allow you a real world environment to walk around the room, interact with audience members, and ask for feedback after the speech is over.

Step 14.

When finished, ask your friends and colleagues 2 questions.

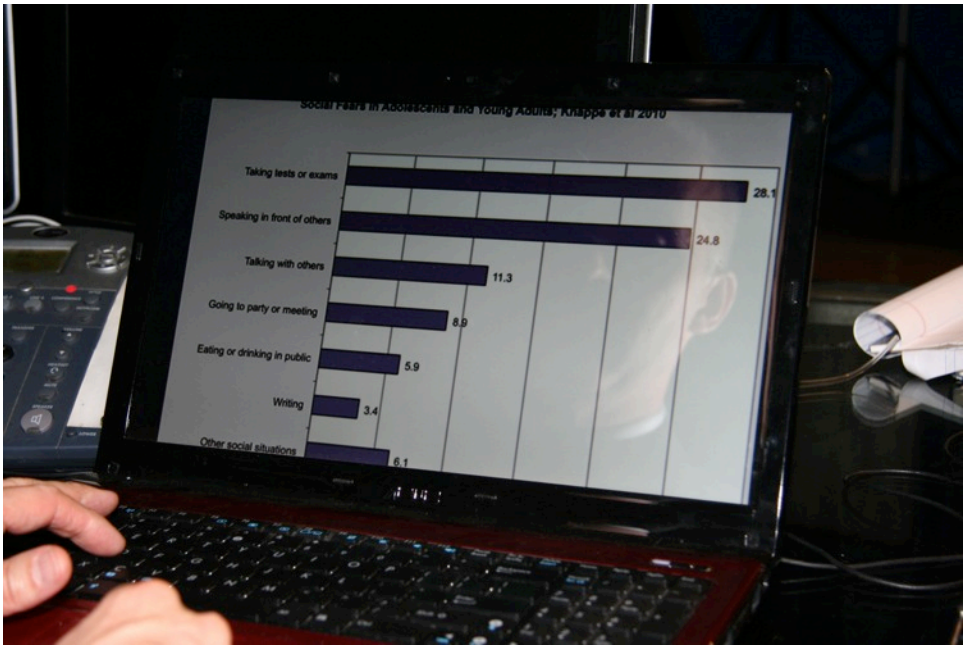
1. What messages do they remember?

2. What PowerPoint slides do they remember?

If your mini-focus group failed to remember any of your main messages, you now have proof that the way you tried to convey that message was boring, unmemorable or ineffective. Go back to your outline and come up with better stories, examples and case studies.

If your audience failed to remember any of your slides, you now have empirical evidence that your slide is completely worthless. Please do yourself a favor and throw it in the trash.

Or you can put the slide into your long text-filled PowerPoint deck that you email to people or hand out.



Your friends are likely to tell you that your speech is “fine,” “professional,” “great,” etc. Ignore all of this feedback, as it is meaningless fluff. Instead, focus exclusively on what messages, stories and slides your audience actually remembers.

Step 15.

Ask your mini-focus group what else they liked and didn't like about your presentation.

This is your opportunity to hear about your speech from an audience member's perspective.

You will be able to hear feedback on whether you spoke to fast or too slow, need to improve your body language, make more eye contact, or any of the numerous constructive performance suggestions that someone as an audience member can make.

Step 16.

Now watch video of yourself giving your presentation.

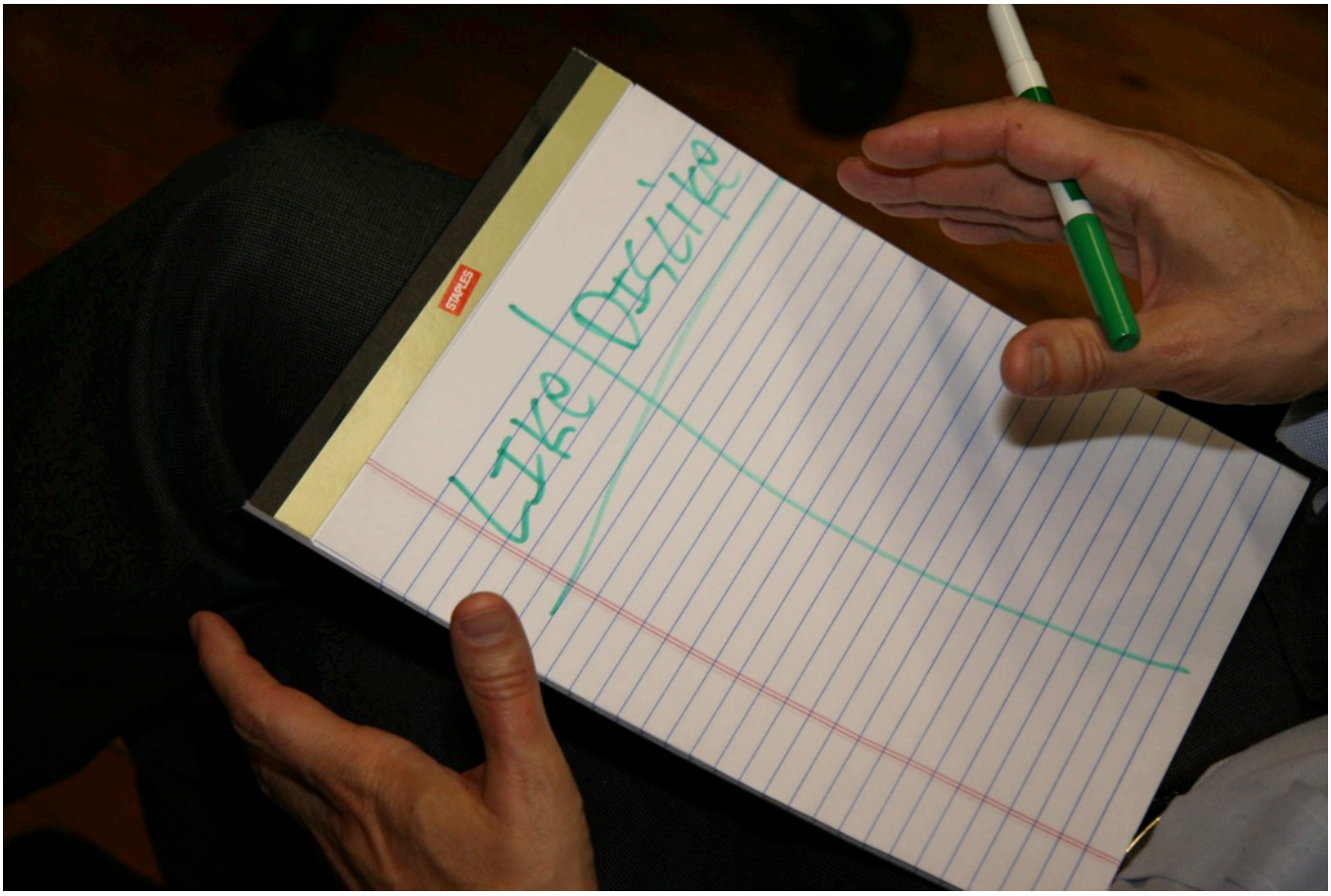
You are going to be tempted to skip this step. Don't skip this step! It is the most important step!

You are going to pretend that you don't have time to watch yourself on video. Liar!

You will come up with some flimsy excuse that you somehow aren't good at watching video. This is a monstrous misrepresentation since you have been watching videos your whole life!

Step 17.

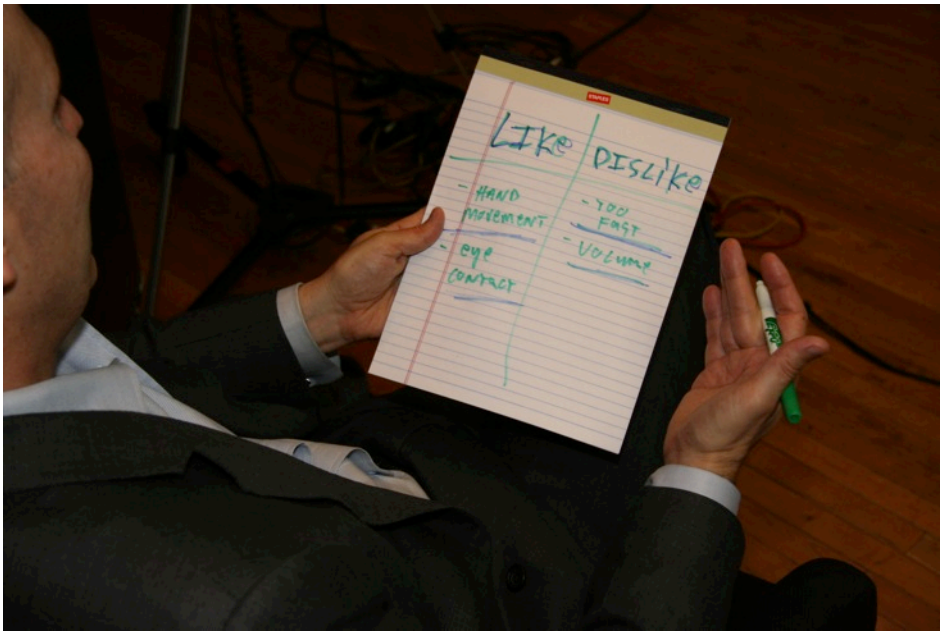
Get a notepad and draw a line down the middle of the page. Write down everything you like about the style and substance of your presentation on one side. On the other side, write down every element of style and substance you don't like.



Chances are, you will find watching video of yourself to be painfully boring. And that's because you likely are really boring. Don't blame the video. If you are boring, blame yourself. The solution isn't to throw away the video; instead you must make your presentation that much more dynamic and interesting.

The key to getting better is to record your speeches and to watch them with a critical eye.

Do not fall into the popular trap of rehearsing in front of a mirror or simply reading your speech over and over again. These are a waste of time. Why use a mirror when you have a cell phone and can easily record yourself.



Step 18.

Reflect on what your friends/associates told you about your speech and look at notes of your own critique. Re-write your speech outline to correct your problems.

This is your time to act as critic and editor for your speech. You never want to look back after a speech has been given and wish you had changed certain aspects of it. At that point it is too late.

The reason I want you to practice your speech multiple times on camera and in front of an audience is because it is always easier to make changes before you give your actual speech then to live with the consequences of delivering a dull, boring and ineffective speech.

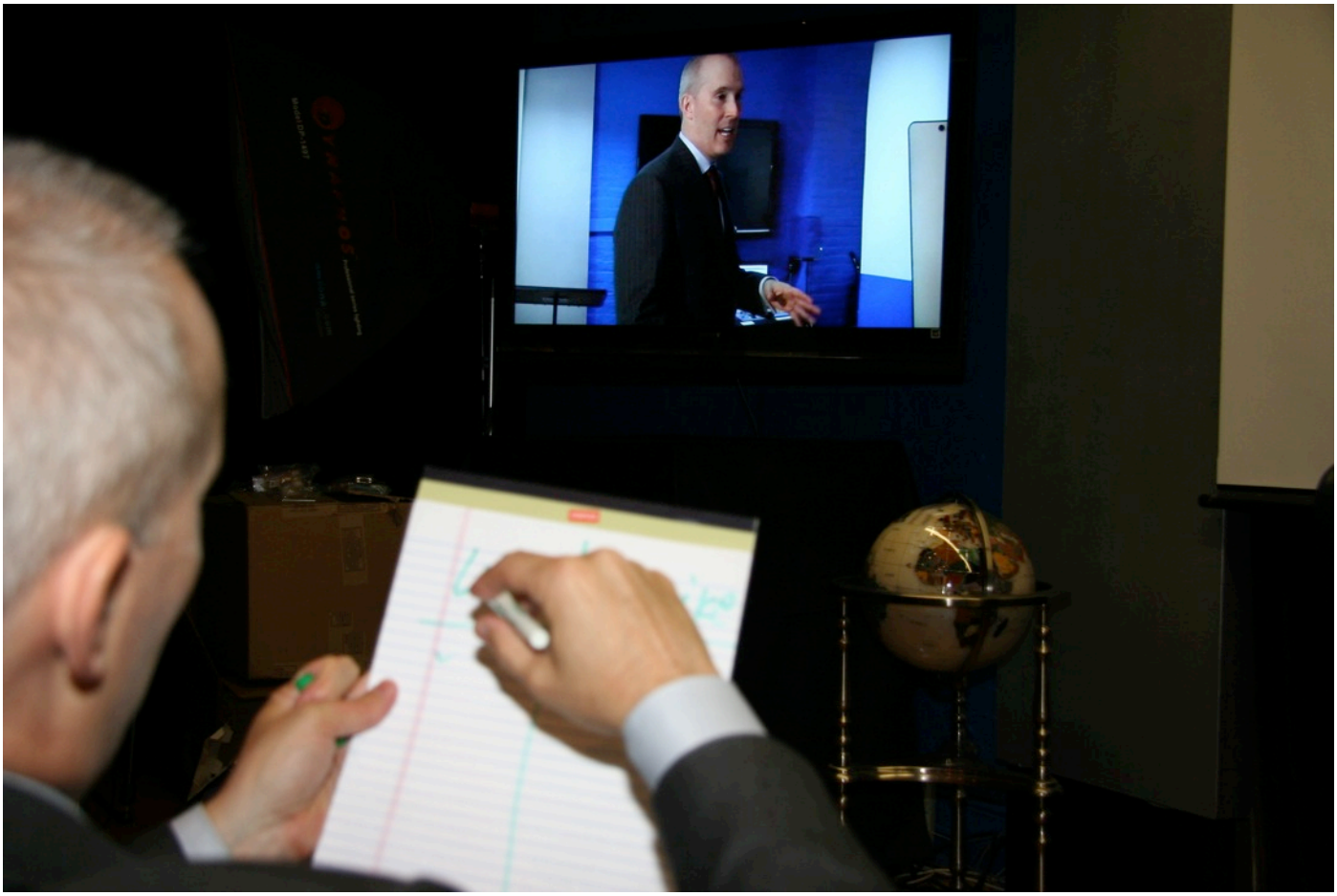
Step 19.

Then, practice your speech again and record it on video.

Yes, you will have to do more recording on video and more watching yourself so that you can see how your changes work and to determine if you need to continue tweaking it yet one more time.

Step 20.

Watch your video and grade yourself. Repeat this process until you are pleased with the style and substance of your entire presentation.



I understand that you aren't going to want to do this. Tough!

Your audience doesn't care about you or what you like to do or not do. The only thing your audience cares about is whether you are interesting, useful, relevant and engaging to them.

Remember: You never get a chance to make a good first impression!

You might be able to practice you speech just one more time on video in 5 minutes and be completely happy with it. Or you might have an hour long presentation and you might need to practice it ten times and watch it ten times, thus requiring 20 hours of your time. Take as long as you need.

Whatever you do, you need to get to the point where you are so improved that you can watch a video of yourself for the entire presentation and love it.

I don't mean you need to feel you are beautiful and funnier than your favorite comedian. But you do need to think that you look and sound your best, that you are coming across the way you want to, and that you have really interesting and memorable messages.

Your role model for your speech needs to be you. If you practice on video and keep making slight incremental improvements till you love your speech, you are now guaranteed to be confident and successful in front of your live audience.

About the author:

TJ Walker has been the personal presentation coach to Presidents, Prime Ministers, CEOs, US Senators, Super Bowl Winners, and Nobel Peace Prize Ministers.

He conducts training's and delivers speeches around the world to help people become better public speakers.

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